



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: March 23, 2006 (06-09)

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## **WSDA intends to assess an \$8,000 penalty against Dee Creek Farm**

**OLYMPIA** – After completing an investigation of Dee Creek Farm of Woodland, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) plans to assess a civil penalty of \$8,000 against the unlicensed dairy operation.

Dee Creek Farm's unpasteurized or "raw" milk was the source of an *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak that sickened at least 18 people in the Vancouver, Washington-Portland, Oregon area in December. Three children were admitted to local intensive care units as a result of the life-threatening infection.

After a joint investigation by WSDA and local health departments, Dee Creek Farm was found to be distributing raw milk without the required dairy milk producer or milk processing licenses. None of the farm's five cows had the required tests that certify the animals to be free of tuberculosis or brucellosis. Also, Dee Creek Farm had purchased a cow in Oregon and transported the animal into Washington without the proper animal inspection certificates. For each of the eight violations, WSDA plans to issue the maximum \$1,000 penalty.

The document issued today by the department, a Notice of Intent to assess a civil penalty, is the first step in the process. The farm has the opportunity to request a hearing before an administrative law judge to contest the investigative findings and the penalty.

"These *E. coli* illnesses were the result of disregard for the law and poor sanitation practices," said Claudia Coles, WSDA's Food Safety Program manager. "The dairy and food safety laws were established to protect people from dangerous or even deadly food-borne illnesses. The department will continue to enforce these laws in an effort to protect the public's health."

Since the *E. coli* outbreak, Dee Creek Farm has been under a cease and desist order issued by the Cowlitz County Health Department that prohibits the dairy from distributing milk products.

On Aug. 11, 2005, WSDA sent Dee Creek Farm a warning letter and license application after a Portland, Oregon newspaper reported that the dairy was distributing raw milk. The agency informed the dairy that unlicensed sale of raw milk is illegal, including milk distributed through a cow share arrangement.

Dee Creek Farm responded to WSDA by denying that they were selling milk, but expressed interest in becoming licensed. The farm has never submitted a license application. A milk producer license is free and the milk processing license fee is \$55.

More information about the investigation can be found at [www.agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/dairy](http://www.agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/dairy).

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